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## Ceramic Skin

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## *Ceramic Skin*

*Carlene English*

Stubborn muck sits patiently upon my sheeted table. Pressing my willing fingers firmly into its body, I direct the malleable, amorphous substance into structured forms and molds.

Nothing compares to the way earthy clay melts into my eager palms, begging to be perfected. As effortless as butter, the once indefinite blob takes on a shape as solid as concrete. I'll spend hours caring for her fragile frame and in return she expresses gratitude, standing tall and unyielding.

After days of manual labor, skin cracked and parched, my masterpiece will call out to me, awaiting the next step. Her finished grooves and curves satisfy me because she stands proud of her imperfections, unapologetic. Raised sturdy and resilient, I know that she'll survive the intense confrontation of the heated kiln and emerge imperishable as ever.

However, a hint of doubt gently disturbs my mind, the same way an adoring parent feels watching on the sidelines as their child packs up their belongings to leave. I desperately want to keep her here forever, but I know that is not what's best for her.

I dream about the dust of ceramic fragments because my creations are portions of myself I want to release into this world. Each step of the process is parallel to the transitions in life we must overcome, transforming into the best versions of ourselves. We are all molded by our surroundings, admired by those who love us, and through it all, we emerge from the consuming fire victorious, for we have survived the worst and arisen stronger.